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838 woman who dressed as a man and used to hunt successfully, [171] though she was married. Such practices are said to have been not uncommon among the Haida. The women were considered
* [776] bold and independent, but the Bella Coola of today know little about them, and are not even certain that *Spuzz* is responsible for a female assuming the actions of a male. It will be readily understood that he is not regarded with much awe, nor does he influence their daily lives.

* 776 Another supernatural being, uninfluential though resident [822] upon earth, is Echo, *Setsalāsl*, "The Voice Repeater." The Bella Coola regard him as a male being, in human form, and recognize his presence whenever sounds reverberate. He figures in mythology, occasionally appears as a masked figure at [575] *kusiut* or *nusuk* dances, but has neither helped nor harmed human beings for so many generations that he is accordingly neglected.

* 776 A supernatural being from whom many Bella Coola have 787 had unpleasant visitations is *Sīkmsila*, the cause of nightmares. 828 He is a man-like creature with black face and an enormous head which he constantly scratches. His home is in *Nuxmāt-a*, but he frequently descends to this world and frightens sleepers. If a person scratches his head while asleep it is because he has just seen *Sīkmsila* doing so, and if he walks in his sleep it is to escape this supernatural visitor. A sleep-walker is usually aroused by having a bucket of water thrown over him. A [751] person frequently troubled by *Sīkmsila* can avoid him by painting a black circle around each eye before going to sleep.

* 776 With the exception of *Hiyuntsa*, the supernatural beings thus far described play little part in the lives of the Bella Coola. They believe in their existence, but do not expect to meet them, and do not believe that they exercise much influence on the course of their daily life. Supernatural beings of this ineffective
● 781 type are exceptional. A man goes into remote parts of the
* 776 mountains, or even into little frequented areas around his village, with mingled fear lest he encounter an actively malicious being, and hope that he may meet a benevolent one. More-

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over, he is aware that by certain means he may have good expectations of beseeching, cajoling, deceiving, or rendering powerless any supernatural beings whom he may meet. This attitude is typical; the Bella Coola by no means move in constant dread of the mysterious denizens of the forests, nor do they eagerly hope for their appearance; they have their likes and dislikes, their moments of weakness and of strength, their times of greatness and of pettiness, all to be considered with care and forethought.

One of the beings for whom the older people have a profound respect is *T̈litcäplilăn-a*, a supernatural woman whose home is in *Nusmăt-a*, but who frequently visits this earth. She can be recognized by her snout-like mouth and long, pendant breasts, but even when beyond the range of vision her proximity can be detected by her singing. *T̈litcäplilăn-a* often takes pity on a person who is dangerously ill and visits him, not only curing the malady but bringing the sufferer a name and song. In many cases he is thus made a shaman with power to cure. At other times *T̈litcäplilăn-a* bestows her favours on a person in good health, so that wise Bella Coola are always hoping to meet her. Such an experience is not without its dangers, for she is so powerful that nearness to her may be enough to cause death. The exploits of those who have come in contact with *T̈litcäplilăn-a* belong to shamanism and will be reserved for vol. I, chap. IX.

T̈litcäplilăn-a, though her great power inspires fear, usually behaves in a kindly manner to mortals, who accordingly welcome her. But it is quite otherwise with *Sxaiaxwax*, whose coming almost invariably brings death.[1] He is a black-faced being of repulsive appearance and sensual nature, whose chief function is to seduce women. For this purpose he often skulks near a village at night, and assumes the voice and appearance of a girl's lover to lure her into the forest. Fearlessly she goes with him, but if she allows his approaches, a hemorrhage results and she soon dies. There is said to be no limit to the number

[1] Cf. Boas, p. 42.

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the Bella Coola. No one knows the name of the fire devourer, and it may be that he lacks form. Though ignorant of the law of conservation of matter, the Bella Coola realize that the wood must have gone somewhere, and postulate a land far across the western sea where burnt wood lies in shadowy heaps, each billet retaining its original form though it lacks material substance. This region is presided over by an evil being with a desire for human flesh (II, p. 468).

The above list by no means exhausts the anthropomorphic beings resident either in *Nusmāt-a* or in this world. Those described are the most important, and suffice to make clear the religious attitude of the Bella Coola to beings of this type. Others appear in connection with *kusiut* dances only, and a consideration of them can be deferred until vol. II, chap. I, whereas some belong essentially to shamanism and allied subjects treated in vol. I, chap. IX.

ZOOMORPHIC BEINGS

The attitude of mingled hope and fear with which the Bella Coola regard their supernatural anthropomorphic beings is typical of their thoughts and actions concerning zoomorphic creatures as well. In the supernatural world the dividing line between human and animal beings is not clearly defined; fabulous monsters have the mentality of supermen, and can be appeased, besought, or cajoled precisely as are anthropomorphic beings. Like those of human form, supernatural animals can bestow good or evil on human beings with whom they come in contact. The division shown in this chapter must, therefore, be regarded as merely for convenience; it does not correspond to a distinction in the minds of the Bella Coola.

One of the most dreaded animals known to the Bella Coola is the *smaaq*, a monster about the size of a large grizzly bear, with long, silky, beautiful hair, blue-grey in colour. It walks almost upright on short hind legs, so that its long fore-legs touch the ground at intervals; these are provided with sharp

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539 seized and carried to the shore. He had thought that it would
* 776 be easy to free himself, but he found it impossible and was carried under the sea. He bit frantically at the enfolding arms, until he succeeded in freeing his own, with which he pushed up the beak of the octopus, thus killing it. He rose to the surface and returned home none the worse.

[825] The Bella Coola do not profess to know all the animals of the world; and if they see a strange one, they assume it to be one known to their ancestors though unfamiliar to them. 539 Since any unknown animal is considered to have supernatural 761 power, due care must be exercised when one is seen. The fol-
* 776 lowing incident illustrates this point.

825 The mother's brother of an informant worked for some thirty years for a white man in Victoria. His employer once sent him to see a turtle which was confined in a pool in a basement preparatory to being killed for a banquet. As soon as he saw it, he said:

"My parents in Bella Coola told me of such a creature."

A few days before Christmas the turtle was cut up and displayed on four platters in the window of the store; the Bella Coola saw it, and thus learned that it had been killed. The same night a sore appeared on his wrist, and by the next day it was large and running. He said to his employer:

"In a few days I will be dead. Do not grieve for me. The sight of such supernatural creatures is too powerful for Indians; I survived one experience, but twice has been too much for me and I will die."

His employer wisely sent him to a white doctor who cured him, although the scar remained. Years later the man returned to Bella Coola where he displayed the mark as proof of his story. A few weeks later he died, and the Bella Coola are firmly convinced that his death was due to his having seen the turtle many years before.

* 776 Although the forests of British Columbia abound with
989 supernatural animals of enormous power, the attitude of the
● [781] Bella Coola hunter who penetrates into lonely places is not one of constant fear. It is true that he may meet danger at any turn, but danger is part and parcel of human life, and he is by no means defenceless. He dreads the powers possessed by creatures of another plane, but they for their part dread certain human objects. Clothing which has been worn for so long that it has become steeped with the emanations of its

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with a number of the large cone-shaped whistles used for *sisaok* ceremonial. Towards dawn, sounds come from these, and sometimes a dull thump is heard on the roof, as if a heavy being had landed there. At once there is great excitement within the house. The voices of supernatural people prove them to be at hand. No one is allowed to leave except a *sisaok siki*[9] who is skilled in dealing with *Mulakila*,[10] also called *Sixsixqwtnam*, the supernatural being closely connected with the *sisaok* ritual. Those within can hear the voice of the *siki* raised as if he were speaking to someone at a distance.

"Chief, you have come too early," he says. "The house is not yet ready. Please return later."

He is answered by loud whistling, which grows fainter, as if the being who made it were moving away. In reality the young men are merely blowing less forcibly into the whistles.

[9]The accounts of all informants agree that much of the *sisaok* ritual was newly imported into Bella Coola from Bella Bella. According to some statements, *Paiks*, a Bella Coola chief who died between 1870 and 1880, married a Bella Bella wife, also one from Rivers Inlet, and it was these two women who brought with them as dower certain *sisaok* prerogatives. It is said that previous to that time the Bella Coola did not understand the use of the large cone-shaped whistles, nor were they able to summon the supernatural beings to the youths secluded in the back-room, nor to dispel the beings at the conclusion of the rites. On the other hand, some Bella Coola claim that their first ancestors brought the whistles with them from the land above. It is probable that the calling in of the supernatural beings is a recent addition to the potlatch, which accounts for the contradictory accounts, but whether or not the whistles are a new feature is more doubtful. It appears certain that the prerogative of *siki* has recently been obtained from the Bella Bella. *Siki* means "the one who cures," and the name is given to the man whose prerogative it is to tend the *kusiut* initiates in whom supernatural powers are located. In Bella Bella there is a similar functionary for *sisaok* matters, known as a *hai-alakila*. Through intermarriage several Bella Coola have recently obtained this prerogative; in each case it is frankly stated that it has been derived from the Bella Bella. The Bella Coola apply to these, so favoured, the term *siki*, as they do for the *kusiut* "curer," though the Bella Bella name, *hai-alakila*, is used with equal frequency. The present *siki* have endeavoured to claim for themselves certain ceremonial functions formerly carried out by any *sisaok*. In this account of a potlatch it is assumed that a *siki* is functioning on all occasions, but in many cases any senior *sisaok* is considered sufficiently close to the supernatural beings to act satisfactorily. Until about 1870 it is clear that any *sisaok* was regarded as capable of doing so.

[10]Knowledge of this being is said to have been acquired by the marriage of a certain *Smaaxa* of Kimsquit to a Bella Bella woman in the beginning of time.

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The *siki* returns to the house and tells the guests that *Mulakila* has indeed been near and has promised to return later on. Those who are not *sisaok*, being steeped in the belief concerning the omnipresence of supernatural beings and ignorant of the carefully concealed whistles, readily credit the tale that they have heard the voice of a denizen of the land above, whose language is intelligible to the *siki*. Thus is the supernatural element of the potlatch first called forth.

After a final distribution of food, the guests return to their homes.

THE INITIATION OF *Sisaok* NEOPHYTES

At a potlatch valuable presents are given to the foreign guests, but it is unthinkable for the donor to give to his fellow-villagers. Accordingly, if X desires to display his generosity towards them, he does so at a preliminary ceremony, when he begins the initiation, or re-initiation, into the *sisaok* society of any number of young people. After elaborate counting and re-counting of his goods, both those actually stored in his house and those promised,[11] X decides that he has sufficient to initiate, for example, seven neophytes. His first choice will be his own children, failing those, the sons and daughters of a brother or sister, or of his wife's relatives, or, if none of these are available, those of a friend. X does not gain any pecuniary advantage from such a transaction, in fact he loses, but the prestige attached outweighs this consideration.

"Is it not the privilege of a chief to be generous?" say the Bella Coola.

He approaches the parents of those whom he has selected, always members of old-established families. As it is to the social advantage of a young person to be a *sisaok*, a father usually tells X a *sisaok* name, dormant in his family, which he wishes to have conferred on his son, and how much he is willing to contribute for the purpose. In many cases, a man will

[11] In spite of the care exercised, mistakes are frequent, giving rise to hurried borrowings from friends to make up the necessary amount.

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533 This is presently heard. Y may be in his own house, but at
* 556 once any number of *sisaok* rush in and conduct him, concealed
575 in their midst, to the back-room of X's dwelling. All the *sisaok* of the village begin to gather there; those who are not members of the society are also free to enter the main part of the house, though they cannot take any part in the proceedings.
[781] They lurk near the door, watching with interest mixed with fear, and ready to flee if the danger from supernatural beings seems too acute.

After some delay, a whistle is heard at intervals, gradually becoming louder as if the supernatural being, of which it is the voice, were coming nearer. Presently it sounds immediately outside the door, and a *siki* rushes forth. He returns in a moment, followed, amid the breathless excitement of the uninitiated, by a figure masked as a bird or animal. The design represents Y's crest, or some creature with which one of his ancestors came in contact, and which is therefore regarded as having the same sociological importance. A member of the society has carved the mask, another wears it, but this the uninitiated do not know.

[532]

[776] "It is a *tutwinam*,"[13] they gasp.

The figure crosses the house and bends down beside the singers to whom it appears to be whispering. Presently they begin, softly, to tap out a song in rapid time as if the supernatural visitor had just taught it to them. It is divided into two or three parts and the theme is taken from Y's ancestral myth.[14] After two or three rehearsals, the singers beat out the time more loudly and accompany it with their voices, while the masked figure dances. A number of older *sisaok* accompany the performer as he whirls around the house; it is pretended that this is necessary to shield the spectators, though the real function is to guide the dancer whose sight is handi-

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[13] Meaning, "What is displayed," or, "A materialization."

[14] If the neophyte is a son or other near relative of the chief who is giving the potlatch, the theme may consist of boasting references to the goods about to be distributed. This is customary for X himself if he performs as a *sisaok* at the actual ceremony.

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adopted, probably as a prerogative obtained through marriage, from the Bella Bella or Rivers Inlet people. The diversity in ritual supports this view. There was not sufficient time for the procedure to become stabilized between the introduction of the concept and the dislocation of Bella Coola social life through the influence of the white man. It is also possible that the *tutwinam* was added to *sisaok* rites from the older *a'alk* society (I, p. 273).

Whatever may have been the history of the *tutwinam*, it provides Y with a mask, or with two, if two figures have appeared. He guards them jealously, though secretly, throughout his life and uses them only on rare ceremonial occasions. It is one of these masks which will be brought out if one of his family gives a dramatic representation of his return after death. A mask of this type is sometimes willed, but the legatee alters the design before using it.

A short pause follows the singing of the second, or third, song, during which some chief or chiefs may make a laudatory speech concerning Y's family history. Then the singers again sing the first song, and *sisaok* members of the audience join in. Similarly, the second song is practised. These two are sung, time after time, until the *sisaok* have thoroughly mastered them. When the singers consider that this has been accomplished, they tell X, who communicates with the *sisaok* man outside who has the whistle, and again its eerie notes are heard. Some of the uninitiated, believing that the supernatural being who gives potency to the ritual is at hand, hurriedly leave in fear. At the same time some of the *sisaok* conduct to the back-room the second initiate whose songs are to be sung that night. The procedure in his case is identical with that described for Y. Usually it is considered sufficient to seclude two on one night, though three may be attempted. When the songs of the last have been sung, food is distributed and the people disperse.

A few nights later the same ritual is repeated for two more initiates, who join their predecessors in the back-room. Here they spend their time in idleness, the only essential being the

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turns, clad in his ceremonial costume, including a long cape with pockets. With him come the four or five young men who have just finished dancing. The singers beat time furiously with their sticks, and the *siki* whirls round and round, working himself into a frenzy with twists and gyrations. Gradually, he approaches one of the initiates, and pretends to pluck something from his body. As he opens his hands the spectators see that there is something in them, what exactly, they cannot distinguish. Only those who are *sisaok* understand that, whatever it is, it has been palmed from one of his cape pockets. He pretends to throw this object upwards, at the same time slipping it back into his cape. As the article is, theoretically, thrown aloft the sound of whistling is heard, which grows weaker and weaker till it finally ceases. Meanwhile the heralds discourse loudly with one another about how the "eagle" or whatever it is, has been extracted, and is now returning above. The same procedure is repeated for the other initiates. This concludes the night's ceremony. Food is distributed and the people disperse.

The employment of a foreign *siki* to expel the power from the initiates is necessary since this particular prerogative is not native to Bella Coola. Formerly the expulsion was done in the back-room without any elaborate ceremony. This rite marks the admission of initiates into the *sisaok* society although they cannot yet leave the back-room. It must be understood, however, that a youth may be initiated several times, on each occasion receiving new songs and perhaps a different mask. In this way his prestige as a *sisaok* is increased, and the son of a powerful chief will often be initiated ten or more times. A mask so acquired is preserved in concealment as the personal property of the owner who may use it at potlatches on future occasions. It will be the guise in which a dead person returns to visit the living. After being used for this purpose, a mask may be burnt, or willed to a near relative of the deceased, who slightly alters the painting before using it himself.

It is somewhat difficult to understand the attitude of those

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watching either the masked dancer or a representation of the deceased. Usually, the feet are plainly visible, and the spectators cannot fail to realize they are looking, not at an eagle or other supernatural creature, but at a man. Yet no one ever expresses this doubt. It must be remembered that all are firmly convinced of the close relationship existing between denizens of the land above and members of the *sisaok* society. To the uninitiated this is proved by the whistling. They regard the figures as supernaturally endowed representations of those beings with whom the participants are able to come in contact. A sophisticated Bella Coola likened their attitude to that of a man praying before images of the saints, fully realizing that these are only inanimate statues, yet mentally experiencing a feeling of close contact with the saints themselves. Another expressed it thus:

"The uninitiated are trained to believe what they see. It would be most improper for them to voice any doubts, in fact they do not have any, so firm is their belief in the supernatural power of the members of the *sisaok* society."

This last appears to be the real explanation. Everyone must have his or her doubts, but each is afraid to express them, realizing that so doing would not only offend the chiefs, as individuals, but the supernatural powers with whom they are in touch, which is obvious from the whistling that accompanies the ceremony. It appears that the uninitiated have no idea how this is produced.

CONCLUDING CEREMONIES AND OBSERVATIONS

The number of *sisaok* initiates is usually too great to allow all to dance on one night. If possible, this is done; but if not, on the following evening more of the initiates perform in the manner already described. The distribution of presents and the expulsion of power from the young *sisaok* also follow the same lines. If many of them are secluded, three, or even four, nights may be required until the last one has danced, and the last cleansing has been performed.

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the hole in the roof, ponderously and slowly, until its talons grip the "body." In the same gradual fashion it carries this upwards until, just before the burden disappears through the roof, one of the principal singers leads his fellows and the audience in calling out: 575 766

"*Ye*...," which has the significance of, "May you have a safe passage whence you came and whither you are going."

As soon as the bird has disappeared, its notes are heard from above, growing gradually fainter as the actors blow their whistles less violently. An eloquent *sisaok* stands up and expounds how the deceased's crest has come down from above to carry away his body, and often mentions incidents in the ancestral myth to explain why this bird had appeared. A young man is sent up to replace the roof boards and the hidden accomplices rejoin the audience unostentatiously. The corpse itself remains hidden in some back corner of the house where it was concealed at the time the dummy was seized, so that nothing indicates what has taken place.

The relatives must give presents to all who have witnessed this ceremonial prerogative. These are now distributed without regard to the rank of the recipient; such gifts are not returnable and are said to be, "What Has Been Shaken Off," like dust from the departing body. [556] A meal, likewise provided by the kinsmen of the deceased, is next served, and as the people are eating, it is customary for senior *sisaok* to make laudatory speeches, extolling the dead chief and comforting the survivors by reminding them of the way in which he will be looked after in virtue of his ancestral traditions. [537] This procedure may continue for several hours, and it is only when no one else wishes to speak that the people disperse.

It is not easy to comprehend the attitude of the Bella Coola to this rite. Some influential *sisaok* state emphatically that in former days it was possible to carry it out so realistically that the uninitiated were deceived, and never suspected that the actual corpse was later on buried in secret by the singers, carpenters, and *sisaok*. On the other hand, those who do not 575 766 781

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575 766 781 wish to emphasize the importance of this society, state that the deception was always apparent, and that even the hooks and ropes by which the figure was manipulated could be seen. Still others regard the ceremony as a symbolic means of portraying the manner in which a man's crest comes to carry away his spirit and life. It seems clear that different interpretations must always have been accepted by different [184] members of the community. A young and ingenuous uninitiated, steeped in the atmosphere of the supernatural, may well have believed that he was gazing upon an actual supernatural being, as the senior *sisaok* desired him to do; others must have recognized that a deception of some kind was being practised, but dramatization is such an important factor in Bella Coola life that individuals often disregard the difference between semblance and reality, and it is contrary to custom for a person to cast aspersions upon the prerogative of another. It is easy for such an one to accept the drama as a symbol or representation of the manner in which the crest carries off the intangible elements of the dead. This is certainly the attitude of the Bella Coola at the present time. Everyone realizes that the crest is of human manufacture and that the corpse itself is not carried away, but the rite is still performed and gratifies the survivors by giving them an opportunity to display their prerogative and the cloak of the deceased's ancestor.

575 766 Perhaps because of its relatively recent introduction, details of the performance of this rite are not fully standardized In some cases, the crest is made to appear at the same time as *Mulakila*, instead of at a subsequent ceremony. It is [424] assumed that the origin of the rite is in some ancient myth in which the body was actually taken above by the crest, an act copied, with the aid of carpenters, by the descendants [773] of the person to whom this occurred. There are no myths of this nature current in Bella Coola, although it is thought that such must have been common among the peoples of the outer coast to explain the prevalence of the practice in that area. [424] One old man mentioned that an *Owiki* myth in which a

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CHAPTER IX

RELATIONS WITH THE SUPERNATURAL

Introductory—Sterile Apparitions—Supernatural Aid Granted to the Unfortunate—Supernatural Good Luck—Shamanism—Direct Revelations from the Supreme God—Power Localized in Certain Spots—Dreams

INTRODUCTORY

THE aspects of Bella Coola life thus far described have been principally of a nature which might be experienced by any member of the community. On the other hand, contact with supernatural beings is a privilege granted to individuals without respect to rank; even arduous appeal cannot assure it. The few to whom signal favours are granted acquire a position of importance totally different from that of chiefs. The Bella Coola are firmly convinced that supernatural beings abound in the mountains and forests of British Columbia, and that every activity of human life is governed by them. Not only do these creatures include monsters of the imagination, but birds, animals, and fish; even the activities of the human mind are considered to be beyond the scope of normal life. Ancient stories describing the actions of strange creatures and conversations between man and animals are accepted as truthful accounts, so that it seems obvious to the Bella Coola that his ancestors were more powerful than he is today. Never considering the possibility of errors in his stories, he accepts the alternative hypothesis that mankind has sadly degenerated from the golden age. Nevertheless, he assumes that the beings have not altered, and consequently hopes to encounter them on every occasion. Moreover, this firm background of belief makes it easy for him to recognize supernatural influence in events which a white man would consider to be natural. It is impossible to over-emphasize this concept.

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* 787 [535] [781] Dances portraying supernatural beings, carried out with full vigour until a few years ago, further fostered belief in them among participants and uninitiated alike. Consequently, many of the young and middle-aged men claim to have seen visions similar to those of their elders. The incident already described (I, p. 30) of the stump which was thought to be a grizzly bear is a case in point. On another occasion a young man mentioned casually that a few evenings before he had seen a headless man walking along the road and that, wishing to view the monstrosity more clearly, he had tried unsuccessfully to strike a match. The reason was obvious to him; the power of the supernatural visitor prevented the match from lighting. The man, who was undoubtedly convinced of the apparition, may have seen something, perhaps a whorl of fog, somewhat resembling a headless body. A white man would have considered such a sight impossible and absurd, whereas the Bella Coola felt little surprise at the appearance of such a creature and promptly accepted it for what it seemed to be. [154]

[828] Mental activities as well as optical illusions are likewise ascribed to supernatural agency. These include profound agitations of the mind, and even what a white man would consider a passing thought. For instance, one morning when about to start work, a certain man stated that he would have good fortune during the day, that a dream had foretold it. At the time he was moving to a new house and needed help to shift a heavy stove. During the course of the day a number of white men happened to pass by and stopped to speak to him; the stove was mentioned, they offered to move it for him, and did so easily and quickly.

"There you are," said the man, "I told you I was going to have good fortune today."

On another occasion the same man claimed to have felt that misfortune had happened to him and soon learnt that one of his sons had been arrested on a charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct. The man affirmed that he had this premonition before being aware of its cause.

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The explanation of these manifestations of the supernormal, for such they are considered to be, lies in the conviction that every activity of the mind is due to supernatural causation, the functioning of the spirit. In the round of daily life there are always good and bad incidents; the person who wakes expecting to meet one or other before nightfall recognizes the fulfilment of his premonition in some small occurrence, and narrates it to his fellows as proof of what he had told them in the morning. In case of some major event, such as death or disaster, the Bella Coola assume that some previous indication must have been given. Looking back after the event, a man easily persuades himself that he "felt" a warning, and is more than ever convinced that his spirit, the cause of his thoughts, has supernatural ability.

Conviction in the near presence of the supernatural has had somewhat surprising results with regard to Christian Bella Coola. A man converted in middle life carries all the fervour and realism of the old religion with him to the new, and feels thoroughly familiar with the atmosphere of the Old Testament. Visitations, such as therein described, are similar to those experienced by his fathers and himself, and he scorns the white man who questions their literal accuracy. He continues to hear the voices of supernatural beings, and to interpret mental pictures as visions, but he ascribes them to the beings of the white man's religion. The following is a rather striking illustration of this point:

A number of years ago a devout Christian, who may be designated X, was a patient in the hospital at Bella Bella. In the same ward was a young Bella Bella lad whose sickness refused to yield to treatment. X, becoming interested in his neighbour, began to ponder about his condition, until presently he felt convinced that the sufferer would be better by seven o'clock the following morning, and told him so. A marked improvement was noticeable by the time predicted, but the white doctor foolishly (according to X) gave his patient some

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159 177 more medicine and he became worse. The same thing happened * 787 on the following day. The sick boy grew steadily worse until, nine days later, he felt that he was dying and asked X to help ● 781 him.

797 "No," replied X, "I am no doctor. But you will be all right. I see Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Believe-it [Faith?] by your bed. Repent and you will be saved."

X added that the Bella Bella saw and repented before his death so that he has undoubtedly been saved.

X is a friend of the writer's and a man with whom he worked for a number of months and whom he feels that he knows intimately. He is almost invariably truthful, and any falsehoods he uses are clumsy and easily detected. In this case there is no doubt but that he believes he saw these four figures as four white human beings. He was in an emotional condition at the time, hoping and expecting to see something of the kind. In earlier days he would have seen supernatural beings of the Bella Coola pantheon with equal conviction. On quite another occasion, when he was preaching, the same man felt what seemed to be a heavy drop of water fall on his head. He was in the open at the time and, looking up, was surprised to find nothing from which it could have fallen. He realized that it must have been power which had come to him, and forthwith he began to preach as he had never preached before. He expected supernatural assistance, and the belief that it had been granted to him undoubtedly strengthened his efforts.

* 787 All Bella Coola are not equally liable to visions and mental 781 visitations. Some, such as X, are constantly experiencing 159 them, whereas others of more stolid disposition do not feel the presence of the supernatural to the same extent. None the less, beings of the other world are constantly around them and, before the introduction of Christianity, it is unlikely that any individual passed through life without coming in contact with some manifestation of the supernatural. Consequently, stories * 787 descriptive of this are intelligible to the Bella Coola, bizarre

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* 756 789 cealed cord succeeded in drawing feathers, previously placed on the surface, around in the direction in which she was dancing. It was impossible to learn the details of the method employed in this trick. The subterfuge was long ago practised by a shaman.

A simple but effective trick was the substitution of a baton made of light maple wood for one of the heavy type used by the singers. The real stick had been passed around the audience and apparently returned to one of the singers, though in reality the false one had been given to him. As he beat time the hollow sound that emanated was a source of surprise to the uninitiated spectators, nor was their wonder lessened when a real baton was again handed around, as if it were the one that had been in use.

[178] According to an informant, the last time that a supernatural being helped the person on whom it had conferred shamanistic power to perform a rite of this kind was about 1870. A man who had fallen from his canoe into the ocean was rescued, but for a long time was ill as a result of exposure. [776 787] River Measurer, the supernatural being who governs the height of tides in the river, appeared and made him a shaman with the ability to cure through the use of a wash-basin. As this shaman danced, he had a large box filled with water. Presently he called on one of the uninitiated to examine the height of the water and point out to his fellows how high it was. A little later he called a second man who likewise indicated on the outside of the box the height of the liquid within. It had fallen, though its disappearance seemed inexplicable.

• 781 789 The above furnishes a good example of the attitude of the uninitiated. The informant, a very intelligent Bella Coola, gave a number of instances of the conjuring methods employed, some of which he had helped to carry out. Unquestionably, this was of the same nature, yet, because he was deceived at the time of its performance, he readily believed that the rite was supernatural; since then he had never thought of doubting

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it. The uninitiated are so steeped in the atmosphere of belief that any simple conjuring trick is sufficient to delude them. 781 789

Finally, the following account is here inserted, though the details of the performance could not be learnt.

The father of an elderly Bella Coola was once so sick that no one could help him. He had coughed up blood, eagle down had been heaped on his body, and hope had been abandoned. Then a *sisiutl* came to him, restoring his health and making him a very powerful shaman. His supernatural visitor had told him to employ his power beneficially, and had further instructed him in the use of a rod wherein it lay. Whenever this man danced, a stick, decorated with bands of cedar-bark wound spirally, was hung horizontally from the roof of his house. He carried one similarly embellished, but smaller, about two and a half feet long and three inches in diameter, having at one end a tuft of bark. During his dance, in which he sang of *sisiutl*, he went under the suspended stick, held the small one in his hand, blew on one end of it, then threw it up so that it struck the large hanging one. This was presumably done by the tuft of bark folding over and catching in some way. Again he danced and, when underneath where the two sticks were suspended, he jumped up, and caught the lower end of the smaller with his hands. This supported his weight, and he swung back and forth on it until he voluntarily released his grip and dropped. When next he danced at the same spot he held out one hand with palm uppermost beneath the smaller stick; the other was held in front of his mouth pointing towards the suspended one. He blew on the latter as if blowing dust from his hand to the point of contact of the two sticks, and the smaller dropped into his outstretched hand. 756* 789

By means of this stick the shaman could cure diseases. When told in what part of the body the pain was situated he pressed on that part with one end of his stick. Then he carried it to the fire and held in the smoke the end that had been in contact with the sickness. He puffed twice at it with his 755 756*

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Furthermore, throughout the ceremonial season, the uninitiated have ocular demonstrations of the powers with which the *kukusiut* are associated. At frequent intervals they are invited to the house of the dancer where, with wonder, fear, and awe, they see strange creatures. Although they may recognize that some of these are only their fellow-tribesmen in strange form, they have no idea how such transformations are produced, and ascribe them to supernatural assistance. They accept the strange designs of the figures as proof that the *kukusiut* have been in contact with unfamiliar beings. It seems clear that the uninitiated do not realize that the representations are produced by means of masks, the work of human hands; instead, they believe that the figures displayed are really those of supernatural patrons who have come to earth to assist their protégés. It must be remembered that these dances take place within large houses, only partially illuminated by a flickering central fire, which facilitates deception and conjuring tricks, quite apart from the credulity of the observers.

The uninitiated may sometimes suspect that the performers are not real supernatural beings, but there is no question of their firm conviction concerning the changes which come over the *kukusiut* at this time. One member of the society, for example, may begin to act in a peculiar manner and at once the uninitiated are ejected from the house. From without they listen with mixed fear and excitement to the strange noises which they do not know are made by whistles, and presently the *kusiut* rushes forth in a frenzied state, biting those he meets. The uninitiated know that he is a Cannibal, doing as his patron above is doing, and that a call from the latter has caused him to become mad. When the *kukusiut* have subdued him and taken him back to his house, the non-membersh ear more strange and inexplicable sounds, which appear to go upwards, and presently the news is circulated that the Cannibal has been carried away to the land above. He is seen no more for several weeks, and when next he appears he is thin, wan, and bald, because the high winds of the land above have blown

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the hair from his head. After various rites which prove that the Cannibal actually possesses peculiar power, he is calmed and songs are sung describing what he saw aloft, and the dangers from which he escaped. The uninitiated shiver sympathetically, marvel at his valour, and anticipate with mixed feelings the time when they too may be privileged to have similar experiences. Or they may witness the killing of one of their fellow-villagers by disembowelling, and his restoration to life. They know the victim; under ordinary circumstances he could not endure death, hence the claim that his strength is due to the call given him by his patron is accepted as an obvious fact. The uninitiated never suspect that they are victims of an elaborate deception. At all times the *kukusiut* are eager to make known their own perils, and if it happens that a member of the society dies while in concealment, his corpse is buried secretly. The explanation given is that he has succumbed to some of the dangers to which *kukusiut* are exposed, a fiction readily believed in view of the absence of the usual funeral rites.

Though it is common knowledge that the ability of a *kusiut* to perform any extraordinary feat has its source in the performance of the same feat by his supernatural patron, yet it is equally well known that his specific power has been brought to this earth and is located in one particular spot. An ancestor must in some way have come in contact with the patron, and at that time his *kusiut* name, carrying with it the prerogatives of supernatural patronage and of dancing on this earth, was deposited for safe-keeping in a repository, *nuskāsiutsta* (also called *nuxwi'ipsta*), by the supernatural woman *Ăno'likwolsaix*. Each repository is thought of as a cave, or hollow, beneath a large tree, a rock, or other distinctive natural object; to obtain his power a *kusiut* initiate must go there, actual contact with his patron being unnecessary. Every *kusiut* prerogative has its repository and in each of these is *Ăno'likwolsaix*; she is one, yet capable of being simultaneously in many hundred spots, corresponding to the many hundred *kusiut* prerogatives. Her

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ceal their subterfuges, it sometimes happens that an uninitiated person sees or hears something which he should not know. The simplest way to deal with this situation is to kill the observer. It is said that as late as 1900 a young man, impelled by curiosity, wandered up a valley into which he had been warned not to penetrate, and met a Cannibal whom he believed had vanished into the upper realms. Almost dumbfounded, he accepted the latter's invitation to sit down, and was slain by him. More often, and especially if the observer is the child of a *kusiut*, he is initiated into the ranks of the society. If this happens at any time of year except the actual ceremonial season, he cannot perform immediately, but he is taken to the secret meeting place of the village chiefs, and there the mysteries of the organization are explained to him. The uninitiated are told that the observer has had a shaman's experience. With the aid of the older *kukusiut* he then performs a dance and conjuring feat of the type already described (I, p. 564), and is secluded until the next autumn, meanwhile wearing the distinctive collar of a shaman. In the songs used on this occasion no mention is made of a wash-basin, so of course the lad only performs ceremonially. When winter comes he is formally initiated into the society.

It is somewhat difficult to understand and explain the sentiments which lead a young man to obey rigidly the dictates of the senior *kukusiut* in deceiving his former friends. If it becomes known that a youth has seen something which should have been concealed, the senior *kukusiut* of his village meet in their ceremonial spot and decide that he must be put through the shaman's rite. Some relative of the youth is always ready to provide the necessary *kusiut* prerogative; otherwise he would have to be killed. Two or three members are then sent to catch the young man. On some pretext they lure him into the woods and then carry him away, struggling in fear, to the holy of holies, the place which he had been told to avoid since he would die if he penetrated to it. Here he finds all the seniors of his village, seated with grave expressions on

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their faces. In spite of what he may have seen, the lad cannot rid himself of the supernatural fears with which he has been inculcated from childhood, and the experience is terrifying to a degree. It may be that he has seen some of the whistles, and thereby learnt that the strange sounds are made by men, not by supernatural beings. In this case he is shown their mechanism in detail, and warned of the dire fate which will befall him if he tells others of his knowledge. Fear impels him to silence, and at the same time he realizes that what he has discovered has placed him in a superior position to that of his former associates. He feels, too, that he has been admitted into the ranks of the society in which his father, grandfather, and ancestors have distinguished themselves, and that it would be desecration to make light of what they have held sacred. Finally, an initiate does not at first grasp the fact that all the rites are deceptions, and by the time that this is apparent to him he has become so thoroughly a part of the organization that he has no thought of betraying his associates, upsetting a vital part in the complicated fabric of Bella Coola life, and exposing himself to ruin and death. A logical white man might think these considerations insufficient, but the existence of the society proves that the varied motives operate so strongly that a young man does keep silence. Some informants state that hypnotism was formerly used to ensure obedience.

The *ḥaḥaxiut* are always ready to deal with an emergency such as sometimes occurs in spite of every precaution. It is remembered that about one hundred and fifty years ago during a dance at the village of *Nuqúmḷt*, a figure, representing one of the supernatural beings, had the misfortune to drop his mask, the strings by which it was tied having worn through. The house was crowded with uninitiated to whom the deception at once became apparent. For a moment there was wild confusion; but the senior *ḥaḥaxiut* rose to the occasion and closed the door, allowing no uninitiated person to leave. Then a *ḥaxiut* was sent out with a whistle which he sounded as if the supernatural being of which it was the voice was growing

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nearer and nearer, till finally a thump was heard on the roof. 575*
O....., cried out the *kukuxtal*, "it is my patron." 176
The uninitiated were told that in consequence of the dis- 711●
aster, the supernatural beings had sent calls to this earth for 424
all within the house. Even small children were admitted on this occasion. Those *kukuxtal* in whose families were dormant prerogatives at once explained to their relatives that the call was from the patron of one of these, and that henceforth the person addressed was a protégé of that being. But even with the assistance of all the *kukuxtal*, there were not sufficient privileges for all who had seen the accident. The explanation hastily agreed upon for those who could not otherwise be provided with prerogatives, was that a supernatural being mentioned in the myth from which the uninitiated had derived his ancestral name had come as patron. Repositories were stated to exist in various places near the village for the designations thus created, and order had been restored before morning. This event was described by so many informants that its historical accuracy can hardly be challenged. Those so initiated were said to have become "*kukuxtal* under easy circumstances"; as prerogatives they had merely the right of singing about their respective patrons, not of performing any particular dramatic dance, but they were, none the less, fully qualified members of the society. The prestige and influence of this organization can be estimated by the fact that it was thus able to carry through a wholesale initiation without its secrets becoming known in adjacent villages. Those admitted, though realizing that deception was being practised, were so overawed by the other members of the society that they accepted what was told them without question, entirely failing to use their common sense. Thus, this incident, which had at first threatened disaster, ultimately reacted to the advantage of the *kukuxtal*. It is true that their prestige was somewhat diminished by the admission of young people, but in compensation they claimed many new patrons, including several regarded with veneration owing to their occurrence in ancestral myths. Since the latter 575*
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Not knowing where to go nor what to do, he hid himself on a small island within sight of the village whence he could see and hear the people seeking him. At times some of his *hahaiat* friends came close, calling his name; but not till he was driven to do so by hunger did he reveal his hiding-place. Then he answered the shouts of two men who at first pretended they were merely seeking him because of the worry his prolonged disappearance was causing his parents. Once the lad was within their group they carried him swiftly to the house of one of the chiefs, where he found himself seated among the most influential men of his village with the door barred behind him. The fear which any youth would feel in like circumstances was increased greatly by the awe with which he, as an uninitiated person, regarded the *hahaiat*, especially on this occasion when he knew that he had roused their anger.

"What did you hear?" asked one of the marshals. The lad was too terrified to lie, so he blurted out all the gossip he had overheard, including the news of the death of the Rivers Inlet Cannibal.

"You have heard too much, you must join us," continued his questioner.

The same man then asked one of his relatives whether he would "buy" the lad from them, that is, whether they would provide the necessary goods to have him initiated. It was understood that through his improper knowledge he had come under the jurisdiction of the *hahaiat* and that, unless made one of them, they would kill him. The lad was the protégé of his uncle who at the time was initiating him into the *nusad* ceremonial, and who accordingly was most unwilling to have his nephew made a *hahaiat*.

"Let him be a spy," said the uncle.

After much discussion this proposition was agreed to; the decision was facilitated by the fact that one of the lad's ancestors had been a spy. All night he was kept sitting in the centre of a group of elders who revealed to him the mysteries of the organization and showed him the whistles and other regalia. For twenty years this man remained a spy, dutifully informing upon any over-inquisitive, uninitiated person.

The informant was more than sixty years of age when he related this incident, but the passage of time had not caused him to forget the utter terrorand feeling of inferiority experienced when he was taken into the presence of the senior *hahaiat*.

Although every *hahaiat* assists in preserving the dignity and awe of the society, this duty is especially the function of those members who are regarded as the earthly representatives of

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though the cost of validating such a prerogative is less than a potlatch, yet a Cannibal dance, for example, entails considerable expenditure, so a man entitled to give such a ceremony frequently lends his right to another, or it may lie dormant for generations. Like other loaned prerogatives, failure to return is a frequent cause of feud. A man frequently gives away a *ḵuxiut* name-prerogative, and if he should give away all of them, he becomes legally an uninitiated. In such a case it is customary for his wife, or some relative, to give him a new *ḵuxiut* prerogative, as is likewise the case when a master causes a slave to be initiated. A name is sometimes given to a person who resembles a deceased relative of the donor.

(2) *A Patron, emâtut.* Little need be said on this point. The words of the songs used by the dancer often describe his patron, always couched in mystical terms for the benefit of the uninitiated. If the supernatural associate performs any type of dance at the gathering above, so can his protégé perform on this earth, otherwise his power is limited to singing of the being. If an individual inherits prerogatives with the same patron from two different relatives, he can merge these to give a composite dance, with consequent additional power. Greedy individuals sometimes illegally add features to which they are not entitled, a cause of bitter feelings. Or one individual may own several prerogatives with different patrons. Although most *ḵuḵuxiut* have only one, yet two or three are not uncommon and one case is known of a man with six distinct patrons. The uninitiated believe that from any one of these may come the call giving him the power to perform.

(3) *A Repository.* In this subterranean shelter his name remains, guarded by *Ănᵘ'lkwuḵuis.* An individual with several prerogatives has a repository for each.

Although the *ḵuḵuxiut* are aware that much of their ritual is deception, it is clear that they believe in the supernatural origin of their rites, and that their ancestors actually had the abilities which their descendants of today imitate. In time

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this undoubtedly leads them to believe in the powers which they claim. Each *kusiut* prerogative has had one of three origins:

(a) It was brought down by the first people. Before coming to this earth each of them saw in the land above his patron, who instructed him in a type of dance, and told him where his repository on this world would be. It is assumed that the earliest men were in contact with all the supernatural beings before coming to this earth, but it is believed that each was "blind" to the patrons of his fellows, and thus had only one.

(b) It was derived from an experience with one of the supernatural beings of this world. In this case the repository was either at a spot indicated by the apparition, or at the actual scene of the vision.

(c) A powerful chief sometimes altered an ancestral to a *kusiut* name. It is believed that this occurred comparatively frequently in ancient times when chiefs had semi-supernatural power. In such cases each followed his own inclination in the choice of a patron,[1] and usually made his own repository within his house, giving strength to it by killing and burying a slave there. Although several Bella Coola informants described this, Kimsquit Indians denied that it could ever have taken place. They say that all repositories were long ago dug by *Nanadjigum*, a male supernatural being sent down by *Alquntam* at the beginning of time to prepare the habitations of *Ana'lkwelxaix* and her husband. After doing this, he returned to the land above where he has since resided.

It will thus be seen that the prerogative of a *kusiut* is always derived from some experience of an ancestor. In carrying out the rite, the dancer feels that he is continuing the works of his forbears, a factor which increases his desire that neither error nor carelessness on his part shall dim the prestige of the society before the uninitiated. And, further, a man who has spent

[1] The Bella Coola cite such actions as proof of the amazing abilities of their ancestors.

[Kusiut Society Initiation]

through the motion of throwing it to his partner; the crystal disappears! It has been palmed out of sight at the instant of throwing, but the presumption is that it has entered the other *siki* who falls to the floor as if stricken down by the powerful object given to him. Now one of the *kukusiut*, who has been primed for the duty, strikes the recumbent man on the back, restoring him to consciousness. Slowly he pulls himself together, rising at intervals as if crushed beneath a heavy weight, and writhes until he finally produces a rock crystal from his stomach, as if it had been thrown to him. In reality it is his own which he has carried concealed from the beginning of the ceremony. He pretends to throw this to X, often so realistically that the novice blinks, expecting some object to strike him. All this time a *kusiut*, it does not matter who, has been drinking water at intervals and spitting it out over the face of X, "to strengthen him." When X has received the stone, the beating on the floor-boards, stilled during the transference of the crystal, breaks out again with full din. After a short interval the first *siki* stops the noise, goes through the same contortions and produces, apparently from his stomach, another rock crystal, which as before he throws across to his partner who falls down, and later passes it to X. Again the beating on the floor is started. The same ritual is carried out until four, or sometimes only two, rock crystals have been given to X. Then the procedure is reversed. The second *siki* goes to the novice and after much contortion draws from his stomach one of the crystals, which he pretends to throw back to his partner. As the latter makes the motion of catching it, he produces his own crystal which he, so it seems, forces into his own body. This is done for all the crystals (see Plate 4). At this juncture the uninitiated are told to leave.

One of the *siki* now kneads the back of X's neck and goes through the motions of pulling something from it. The frightened youth realizes that his spirit is being drawn from him and his terror, great in any case, is not lessened by the *siki* taking it in his cupped hands to the fire where he scoops up

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some ashes which he puts into his mouth and chews. Of course he masticates only the ashes but X, unaware of this, is concerned for the fate of his spirit. At last it is restored to him and he is told that the *siki* has altered it from that of an uninitiated person to that of a *kusiut*.[11] The psychological effect of this act on the mind of a young man who has not had time to adjust himself to his new knowledge and who is firmly convinced of the powers of the *siki* is tremendous.

The first *siki* now instructs two *kukusiut* sitting on either side of X to lie down to serve as a seat for him. They do so, irrespective of who they may be. If the novice is still ignorant of the full mysteries of the society, the *siki* announces that he is going to get a call for X. He walks around the house, peering here and there as if seeking something, and then pounces as if he had caught an object between his hands. A whistle is heard, such as the novice knows accompanies the coming of every call; but he does not know that the noise is made by compressing a goat or bear bladder-whistle between two sticks held beneath the armpit. This is the "mystery" of the strange noises.

"Do you know what makes that noise?" ask the two *kukusiut* on whom X is sitting.

If X denies all knowledge, the mystery is explained to him, and he is warned that he will be killed if he communicates the information to uninitiated persons. If he answers that he knows the cause, he is asked who has told him. Perhaps some lad has been peeking and has told X of what he has seen; in that case the over-inquisitive youth is at once initiated to prevent further leakage of information. As soon as X has learnt the great secret he moves to one side and the singers take their positions behind the fire. His father, or whoever it may be from whom he is to obtain his name, then stands up and unfolds its origin, telling which supernatural being is his patron, and the locality of his repository. X sometimes re-

[11] This part of the rite has been omitted for so many years that many of the middle-aged *kukusiut* have forgotten it.

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prohibitions that last not for one year, but for four. X is not subject to any other restraints. If he wishes to go hunting he can remove his cedar-bark collar and hang it for convenience in the forest near his village, redonning it on his return. The *kukusiut* show considerable interest in their new member, not only by warning him what he must not do, but by teaching him how to dance and to growl or make other of the necessary, but unusual, noises. During the remainder of the ceremonial season X is required to attend every *kusiut* dance, thereby learning much of the ceremonial, and during the following summer his relatives, especially if food is plentiful, frequently invite the *kukusiut* to their house. The singers beat out well-known tunes, or practise those which will be required for the following winter; if a song has been composed for X he dances in time to it, in the style proper to his prerogative. Formerly, when there were many novices, dances of this type took place frequently and were useful in giving constant practice to singers and neophytes alike. As no calls from supernatural patrons can come at this time of year, it follows that all such dances are of a non-sacred nature, although the uninitiated are excluded. During his period as a novitiate, X has one privilege; he can take food from anyone at any type of ceremony. It is remembered that one novice was even bold enough to take food which had been placed as an offering for the dead.

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When the next *kusiut* season opens, X attends every performance. This is probably the most thrilling and nerve-racking period in his life. He does not know exactly when he will be allowed to give his dance, since that is a matter of arrangement between his relatives and the marshals, but he knows that the time will soon be at hand. When the great day, or rather night, actually comes, X is usually in a state of abject terror. The rite itself does not differ from those about to be described except that the first song relates the manner in which X found the repository. But the mental attitude of X differs greatly from that of an old performer. One informant,

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a woman about sixty years of age, vividly recalled her fears when she, a young woman, gave her first performance. It was the Dance of *Winwina* (II, p. 187), in which she had to call out loudly when a large number of uninitiated persons, including Carrier Indians, were present. One of the marshals was her great-uncle and he had carefully taught her what she was to say. A few minutes before the time for her announcement he came to where she lay hidden in an enclosure behind the fire:

"Do you see your relatives here?" he said. "Look at your father, your mother, and your uncles. If you fail to say what you are expected to say, they will all die in a few weeks, and so will you. Be bold!"

The woman asserted that it was the most terrifying experience in her whole life because, though she knew there was deception in the rites, she also knew the power of the society and that the threat of death in case of error was no idle one. She was so frightened that she forgot the carefully learnt words and it required the prompting of the hidden marshal to get her through the ordeal.

But once the first rite has been successfully negotiated, it is a proud day for the novice. He feels himself a real *kusiut* and glories in his superiority over his former associates. For the rest of the season he, like everyone else who has performed a dance, must attend every rite. Energetic novices sometimes give their dances on two, or even three, successive years, though usually a man allows five or six to elapse between displays.

If X should die during the year's interval between his initiation and his first dance, he is secretly buried by his fellow *kukusiut* without the customary mourning rites, and with no uninitiated persons present at the grave. His song, if one has been composed for him, is sung softly, and he is interred adorned with his collar of dyed cedar-bark. During the next ceremonial season, that at which he should have danced, it is necessary for a brother, or other near relative, to receive a call since it is felt that a dance once begun must be completed,

[The Dance of NoaKxnim]

*575 *796 the affair, and so many differences of opinion are voiced that it is often difficult to understand how the ritual can be carried out as smoothly as it is. The masks are tried on, adjustments in the rope fastenings made, and final selection of the wearers approved. In fact, the summoning of the *kukusiut* is regarded by them as an invitation to try on the masks and it is said that [203] [195] the herald sometimes calls them with a cryptic:

"Measure your heads, *kukusiaot*," thesignificance of which the uninitiated fail to grasp.

At last those who are to wear the masks are chosen. They conceal themselves in one of the two matting shelters, while the other is full of those *kukusiut* who have prerogatives as Cannibals, Scratchers, or Breakers. It is these who are most [781] feared by the uninitiated, and if a slight accident should take place they rush forth suddenly, frightening the non-members to such an extent that they fail to notice a mistake which would otherwise expose the mystery of the rites.

Meanwhile *Ăno°likwolsaix* at intervals sticks her head around the corner of the door to mock the uninitiated.

"You stupid ones!" she gibes. "You and you [naming two uninitiated] almost found my repository. You came so close to me that I put out my stick and tripped you up. [A safe statement since everyone stumbles over half-buried roots some time or another.] You were so blind that you did not see me. Look where you are going, keep your eyes open, and then you will become a *kusiut*, instead of remaining a nonentity."

The uninitiated, sick at heart over the missed opportunity, resolve to be more alert in future. Difficult though it is for [781] the white man to understand such credulity, yet different elderly informants repeatedly recalled the chagrin with which they had listened to such remarks when young. Childhood impressions of respect and fear are too deeply ingrained for doubt to enter.

At last all is ready and one of the marshals tells a *kusiut* to open the door and call the non-members. In they rush, to stand near the door and gaze upon the marvels with which X

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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has been in contact. Their attitude of uncertainty as to whether they are gazing upon real supernatural beings or on representations of them has already been described, but the uninitiated do not theorize on the point—they are seeing strange sights about which X and the *kukusiut* know, that is enough for them.

Behind the fire they see a canoe-shaped erection, a model of *Noäkɣnum*'s craft, with six or eight masked heads, his passengers, appearing over the sides. Near this are four more disguised figures, three standing and one sitting. *Ăno°likwolsaix* ranges in the vicinity, while X himself stands behind, at intervals sweeping one arm over the heads of the strange beings and uttering a droning cry. *Ăno°likwolsaix* explains to the uninitiated that the figures have come from afar, that they are powerful, but not to be afraid, since X's drone gives protection to them from the supernatural ones. She points to one of the figures whose mask is painted with the design of a salmon.[24]

"See!" she says, "There is *Noäkɣnum*; unless he brings the salmon they cannot come to our river."

Another of the standing figures is described as *Dakdakänmem*, and the other as *Älätlumktnum*. In each case she states briefly the functions of the being. The seated figure, who wears a large hat and rests on a mat, is the Resident. Great is the mystification of the uninitiated at seeing these supernatural beings[25] normally visible only to X. How they envy him! Another frequent display is of a group of masked figures playing *sleli* (II, p. 382). If this has been done, *Ăno°likwolsaix* explains that this game is of interest to the salmon and that it is therefore played in *Noäkɣnum*'s canoe.

[24] There is no doubt that in former times the Bella Coola attached greater importance to the designs painted on masks than they do at present. Except for a few vague notes it was impossible to obtain information on this subject; in fact, in 1922 there was only one Bella Coola alive who understood the symbols used. This man was drunk so often that he proved an impossible informant. It is fortunate that Professor Boas recorded a considerable number of designs (*op. cit.*), to which the reader is referred.

[25] As already described, the uninitiated undoubtedly believe that they are actually gazing upon supernatural beings.

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[The Dance of Wil·a]

About dusk on the following day X, who is in his own house, suddenly stands up and cries out: 575* 796* 787

"Yes. It has come. I am afraid. Yes! I will do as you bid me."

The *kukusiut* women begin to drone and the uninitiated are expelled. Heralds announce that a *kusiut* has been pressed to earth, and presently they go to every house inviting the *kukusiut* to gather in X's. From this point on, the rite of *ɬsuxtämem* continues in the manner already described.

The ability of X to summon these nine brothers from above is a special prerogative; other *kukusiut* have one or other of them as patron, but lack the power to call the whole number to earth. One *kusiut* has exclusive knowledge of the mat which is spread for *Omqomkilska* when the other supernatural beings summon him to a ceremony; another of the place where the brethren obtain their eagle down. Detailed information was not obtained about these ceremonies. [424]

THE CANNIBAL DANCE

Of all *kusiut* dances, the one of which the uninitiated are most afraid, and which is, therefore, the strongest, is the Cannibal dance. It is believed that the performer is exposed to greater dangers than in any other rite, and observers have the most spectacular ocular demonstrations of his powers. The patrons of most Cannibals are *Älquntäm*, *Sexsexḳälaix*, or *Kämai·ts*, who implant in their protégés a wolf, bear, or eagle, causing them to devour strange foods. The Bella Coola consider that a man is equally a Cannibal whether he has the prerogative of eating corpses, biting the living, eating dogs or raw salmon, or biting himself. The most common of these is the right to bite the living, and few of the older people are not scarred thereby. Fear of Cannibals is one of the strongest causes for the respect with which the uninitiated regard the *kusiut* society, but though the holders of prerogatives of this type are regarded with awe on account of their powers, they are not considered as chiefs, as the Bella Coola say is the case

575* 796* 424 [781] [776] [787] [781] [171] [622]

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*575 *796 tion and those quarrelling follow him as he goes to every house growling and crying *xwa·*, *xwa·*, *xwa·*. By the time he returns home their anger has cooled. It is then necessary to quiet X by means of the elaborate beating of sticks. This is repeated four times, while a *kusiut* spits violently over him.

Before leaving his own home to attend a *kusiut* dance, a little food is always given to X in case he should become hungry and start biting people. On *qotlim* he always dances after the donor of the ceremony,[a] and when the *kukusiut* eat together he always receives his portion immediately after that of the marshals. [626] [781] Fear of all Cannibals is one of the most potent deterrents to the uninitiated, but the most dreaded are those, like X, who have just returned from the land above and may at any moment break forth into an orgy of biting. Several elderly informants recalled vividly the terror with which they regarded such a Cannibal when they were young.

The *kukusiut* take full advantage of the fear which X inspires in the uninitiated. On *qotlim* nights when the time arrives for the latter to depart, they are often chased forth by the frenzy of X, or one of his fellow-Cannibals who has likewise been to the land above. X starts to call out, *xwa·*, *xwa·*, *xwa·*, and rises to his feet; the singers at once begin to beat out one of his songs and the uninitiated hurriedly flee, while the Cannibal's guardians press close around him as he dances as if to prevent him running amuck among the frightened people crowding out of the door. As he dances and hears his song, he becomes more and more excited; he growls and only the repeated *hoip* of his guardians and their pressure upon the back of his neck appear to restrain him. Non-members and even those *kukusiut* who do not understand the full mysteries of the Cannibal dance cannot fail to be impressed. [781] The raising of the arms is supposed to inflame a Cannibal, so if it is desired still more to impress the uninitiated, one of the *kukusiut* lifts his arms, and is bitten by X. The heralds at once go

[a] If several Cannibals have performed in a single year, the order in which they dance is subject to arrangement.

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[The Cannibal Dance]

through the village announcing what has taken place. Meanwhile X, maddened by the taste of blood, dashes from the house, closely guarded by a number of *kukusiut*. Growling, he enters the lowest house of the village and, to the uninitiated there, it appears as if the restraint of his guardians is all that prevents the biting demon from breaking loose among them. This is repeated at every house in the village, and then X returns to that in which *qotlim* is taking place, where he is guided to his usual corner and a *kusiut* throws cold water over him. Any senior *kusiut*, often one who is also a shaman, calls on those present to beat time, and the frenzied orchestra of sticks sounds forth. X remains quiet and more water is thrown over him. This pounding of sticks is four times repeated, and after each more water is thrown over the Cannibal, until at last his temporary fit of frenzy is stilled. Then the *kukusiut* eat in comfort and leave. It must be remembered that the uninitiated hear the beating of sticks from adjacent houses, and their awe is perhaps increased by the fact that they cannot actually see what is taking place.

This liability to madness lasts throughout the ceremonial season, effectively suppressing any venturesome uninitiated, and at the same time serving as a bond of union among the *kukusiut* themselves, who must sink individual differences of opinion in face of the absolute necessity of upholding X's prestige. A Cannibal novice can likewise become frenzied at any time during the summer following his initiation.

The Cannibal dance entails a considerable amount of physical and mental effort, while if X bites many individuals, as he likes to do as a means of demonstrating his prerogative, he is forced to expend a considerable amount of goods as "Bandages." These two factors often deter a man from performing this dance. A Cannibal who has just been initiated as a *kusiut* at once begins to bite, and is carried away to the upper regions. He is required, moreover, to give his ceremony the following winter, like any other novice. During the summer he generally remains hidden within his house, and when he goes

[The Cannibal Dance]

*5775 *796 ●781 [626] The uninitiated, who have seen or heard of X's leanness, readily believe the fiction that he has returned for a meal, and has once more gone aloft. One informant stated most emphatically that this was his belief when a young man; he had been warned by his father of the seriousness of the ceremonial and told that if he should dare to speak or think disrespectfully of it, a *kusiut* would "grip him by the ankle causing the flesh to become rotten." During a Cannibal's absence the uninitiated remain in a state of terror, fearing that, on returning, he may chance to light beside them and devour them. In consequence, they seek refuge in their bedrooms, or at any rate in the immediate vicinity of their houses.

*575 *796 After an absence of thirty or forty days it is decided that X shall return at a certain time. During the night preceding, he washes and shaves his head to further the belief that he has been to a land where the great wind has blown away his hair as well as the dirt from his body. Several accomplices are sent out, to a mountain above the village, to a house in the valley below, and to an island in the vicinity. In the early dawn the man up the mountain drones and growls, usually four times, according to the arrangement made. The people listen expectantly. After a short pause, the man in the valley makes the same noise; no mortal could cover the distance between the two places in the time that has elapsed, but all things are possible to a Cannibal. A herald goes through the village, crying out:

"We are left behind, we are left behind."

The *kukusiut* dash off upstream towards the place from which the sound is still coming, but as they draw near it is stilled, only to break forth presently from the island behind them. The herald goes through the village informing everybody that:

"He has gone away."

Presently X dashes out into a clearing on the island, naked and with arms reddened; he runs around madly while an accomplice in concealment uses a whistle. The *kukusiut* pursue

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placing their hands against his mouth and neck and pressing downwards to the chest as if forcing some object from his throat, constantly uttering the cry of *hoip*. When the obstacle has been driven down, X is offered his first food, choice morsels of dried salmon. He eats some of this but bites a small piece from the spoon, and does the same with the dish in which water is held to his lips. The assistance of a shaman is often required to feed the Cannibal.

The powers of, and restrictions upon, X for the remainder of the ceremonial season are identical with those already described. At the end of the period, however, the *kukusiut* assemble in X's house to rid him of his *sqiols* which, it will be remembered, had been forced from his mouth down into his chest. By means of a violent repetition of *hoip* and pressing with the hands, this is extracted and cast into another *kusiut*. As soon as the latter has received it, he acts as if he had become a Cannibal. Dashing out, he enters each house in turn, growling and calling out *xwa·*, *xwa·*, *xwa·*, and at intervals ripping up the planking from the floor or pulling off boards from the wall. Then the substitute re-enters X's house, where the power is returned to X himself, who, this done, rushes to every dwelling and repeats the growling and destruction. Though the uninitiated realize that two different individuals have appeared as Cannibals, they are too awe-stricken to feel anything but wonder. When he gets back to his own house, X is surrounded by the *kukusiut* who call out *hoip*, in unison four times, while as many of them as can find places press upwards with their hands against his neck and throat to expel the *sqiols*. This succeeds in sending back X's power to the mysterious regions above whence it came. While most of the *kukusiut* beat time vigorously, a number of them pull down the platform and cast it into the fire. They then have a meal, while a marshal gives weighty advice about the care that must be exercised during the coming year in guarding their sacred secrets from the uninitiated; whereupon they all disperse.

The chief contrasts between this rite and the one previously

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[The Scratch Dance]

obey one prohibition; he must not sleep with his wife for four days.

Like a Cannibal, X is liable to frenzy for the rest of the ceremonial season. During this period he remains secluded within his house, and the uninitiated willingly avoid him, believing him to be mentally deranged. He attends every *kusiut* dance, where his latent madness helps to frighten the uninitiated. If strangers from Kimsquit or *Täl·io* visit Bella Coola, he at once becomes frenzied, rushes to the beach and scratches them, precisely as a Cannibal would do; in this case he must be pacified in the same manner. A Scratcher always saves goods to recompense scratched foreigners. If it is the first time that X has danced, he must remain secluded for the following summer, and give his ceremony the next winter. During the warm months he remains within the back-room of his house, and though some of the uninitiated know of his presence, still believing him mad they do not intrude upon his privacy. The coming of foreigners during this period excites him to frenzy and he scratches them, irrespective of the time of year.

It might be mentioned that some Scratcher names are indicative of the dancer's function, and others, such as "The Cause of Fear," have reference to his prowess.

THE BREAKER DANCE

When a Bella Coola speaks of the fear which *kusiut* dances cause the uninitiated, he almost invariably cites in order the Cannibal, Scratch, and Breaker dances. *Kukusiut* with these three prerogatives have no more privileges than other members of the society, nor are they considered superior in rank, but similarity in their functions leads to an almost automatic association. If questioned further, a Bella Coola will usually say that he regards the Cannibal dance to be first, with the Scratch and Breaker equal, but less important. Breakers share with Cannibals and Scratchers the prerogatives of not blackening their faces; of having as theme for their songs the land

[The Breaker Dance]

*575 *796 [424] *Isaix*. X is one of the few *kukusiut* having the prerogative of using supernatural singers. The evening's ceremony concludes in the usual fashion.

Until the departure of his call, X is liable to fits of frenzy so that on both *qotlum* and *nebusam* he often visits every house and breaks utensils, though his guardians appear to be making every effort to restrain him. Breakers, irrespective of their [424] exact prerogative, are enabled to act in any unusual manner they desire, and strive to excel in peculiar behaviour. A favourite trick is to smear themselves with excrement, either real or imitation. It is difficult to over-estimate the enormous [554] [787] [828] prestige which such actions call forth in the eyes of the uninitiated, to whom it appears that the coming of a call entirely alters the mentality of the recipient, a belief which the *kukusiut* make every effort to maintain. Nothing further need be said of either *qotlum* or the preliminaries of *nebusam*, both of which follow the usual pattern.

*575 *796 781 When the uninitiated are admitted to X's house on *nebusam* evening, they are filled with wonder at the sight of the masked singers, of *Sänoltxumulelts Älquntäm*, and of the four supernatural Breakers who move wildly to and fro as the songs are sung, as if only the eagle down which the *kukusiut* blow upon them restrains them from destroying property. The fluent *Änoºlikwolsaix* makes the most of her opportunity to describe the wonders which are before their eyes. Then the uninitiated are told that it will be safer for them to withdraw, and hurry out. Presently they are startled to hear the sound of people moving, and the four supernatural Breakers, followed by all the *kukusiut*, leave the house and proceed to the lowest one in the village. Around the fire go the masked four, picking up stones and hurling them at any destructible property. Most [252] [578] houses contain a number of stones which have been used in boiling liquids, so that there is no lack of missiles. *Kukusiut* [685] who are wise take care to hide or remove valuable property before this inroad begins, since the wearers of the masks take advantage of the opportunity to destroy the goods of those

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[The Breaker Dance]

they do not like. No compensation can be claimed, on the theory that supernatural beings do not have to pay for any damage they may do. Although the property of some *kukusiut* is destroyed, the chief sufferers are the uninitiated; this serves to increase their fear and respect for the society with which such all-powerful beings are in league. After visiting every house in the village, the party returns to X's, where the masks are burnt, the call sent back, and the proceedings conclude in the usual manner.

A certain amount of information concerning the history of the Breaker dance was obtained from *Syuk*, the owner of the prerogative just described. He is a well-informed man, but the writer had no opportunity of comparing his beliefs with those of his associates, so the following must be regarded as unsubstantiated evidence. This man stated that the Breaker dance is the most important of all in Bella Bella, and that many Bella Coola prerogatives have been obtained from this source, although some of their first ancestors likewise enjoyed it. He further stated that the term, *noltcista*, by which the Bella Coola always designate a Breaker, is of Bella Bella origin, and that the ancient Bella Coola term was *dxrtia*.[1] *Syuk* also told of an occasion when a number of Bella Bella, present on the *qothm* night of a Bella Coola ceremony, were disturbed when eating by the thud of a stone thrown, from outside, against the wall of the back-room. Out rushed a number of *kukusiut*, incensed at the disrespect shown to their gathering. They caught the offender, but released him when he was found to be a Bella Bella Breaker, foolishly demonstrating his prowess. The marshals decided to retaliate and arranged with two Bella Coola Breakers to exercise their rights and destroy the canoes and food-boxes of their guests. They did so, and later paid for the damage. The Bella Coola were thus able to demon-

[1] *Syuk* and several of his children are the only Bella Coola known to the writer who habitually use the sound "r." For example, he says "*Snalori*," instead of "*Snalolî*." He says that he is himself unable to distinguish any peculiarity in his own pronunciation, although other Bella Coola are aware of it.

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[The Stomach-Cutting Dance]

in the village announcing that a call has come to X. Meanwhile forty or fifty *kukusiut* have surrounded X and accompany him as he leaves his home and proceeds to the end of the village furthest downstream. He enters the lowest house, followed by his escort, and stops before the central fire to call out: 575* 796* 787

"Please say what you want; I will do it."

He circles the fire, sunwise, repeats his call a second time and leaves. The same procedure is repeated in every house in the village, in order from bottom to top, before he returns to his own home. The uninitiated are told that some power has come upon him, but that it is so strange that even he cannot comprehend it. After a short pause, X again sallies forth, accompanied as before, and calls twice in every house of the village. The same ritual is repeated a third time, but on the fourth round, which soon follows, he carries a knife in his hand. Thus it becomes plain to all that X has received power enabling him to have his stomach cut, and the *kukusiut* show signs of grief at the danger to which their fellow is about to be exposed. Needless to say, the delay in interpreting the call adds to the mystification of the uninitiated, and their wonder at X's power. The heralds do their part by repeating his words with their own comments. [781]

When X finally returns to his own house the heralds summon all the *kukusiut* to it and the customary ritual of *lsuxtämem* takes place. The singers beat out and practise a song composed by one of their members for X, the audience listens attentively and then practises it until all are proficient. The theme of every *kusiotem* song is of the land above and the supernatural beings resident there. The wordless chorus consists of *wai'aiye'iu*, which the Bella Coola state is the refrain of all *kusiotem* dances up and down the coast. 575* 796* 533

The second day, *nusiutälsap*, a second song is composed and a party sent to the forest to bring in wood suitable for masks. In the evening part of the work is allotted[*] and the songs practised. For *kusiotem* dances, in addition to masks, a 575* 796* 532 [533]

[*] Some is kept for a later distribution.

Σ: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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number of puppets is always made. Certain *kusiut*, known as *dnuyar*, have in connection with their dance prerogative, the ability to summon and display supernatural objects in the form of small puppets. These are sometimes patrons, more often not, and include not only beings having human form, but snakes, hummingbirds, and other creatures. By calling his being, an *dnuyar* receives strength which can be transmitted to someone else—so the uninitiated believe—by passing it into the recipient's body. Non-members are told that X suffers death from which he is resurrected by his own powers, reinforced by those passed into him by other members of the society through the transference of their puppets. The most potent "patron-puppet" is the giant toad. It is difficult for a white man to understand how intelligent people, as are many of the uninitiated, can be deluded into believing that the somewhat rudely carved wooden figures which they see moving before them are supernatural beings. Emphasis must again be laid on the awe, mystery, and power of the ceremonies in the eyes of those who do not understand them, and the very great skill shown by the carpenters in making use of hidden strings, trap-doors, and other devices to increase the dramatic effect. Puppets are guarded very carefully by their owners and are usually hidden in some cleft of the mountains. A well-constructed one is used when necessary for many years.

Other preparations must be made for the stomach-cutting. As in all other *kusiut* dances, deception is practised and X is not really disembowelled. Instead, a wooden, or copper, frame is made to shield his stomach; over this is arranged the skin of a deer or a dog, cut to cover him from chest to thighs, with even the navel imitated. This camouflage is held in place by his breech-cloth and by a strap passing around his chest. He wears a blanket which conceals most of the fastenings so that the artifice is not noticeable in the dim light of the house. The chief difficulty is to find a dog with skin the same colour as X's. Many animals are killed, and the fur removed by immersion in boiling water, but sometimes half the dogs of a village must

2:McGowath B-5 (1923-1924) 1948
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[The Stomach-Cutting Dance]

be slaughtered before one is found with skin to match.[a] The marshals carefully supervise all these arrangements, but of course on this night the work alone is allotted. The entrails of several dogs are kept and worn by X between his false stomach and the wooden frame.

After the allotment of tasks in connection with the mechanical work required, the marshals ask four women to come forward. Those selected are usually old people with good voices who, from long experience at the dances, have mastered the two[bb] songs used at each Ascension dance. The theme of these never varies and is believed to have been handed down from the distant past. No prerogative is attached; the marshals and singers merely choose four women whom they think will be good performers. The songs resemble those sung at mourning ceremonies; in fact, they are used with that significance when X has been "killed" by disemboweling. The singers, the women chosen, the marshals, and any other *Ascension* who feel competent to do so, discuss in an animated manner the exact wording and tunes of the songs. Then the musicians beat out the time and the women sing one after another, while the audience drowns. In view of the solemnity of the occasion, it often happens that senior singers from adjacent villages are invited to be present to render assistance. The necessity for practising X's songs, apportioning the carpentry, and rehearsing the mourning songs has taken up more time than is usual on a *nacielelogo* night, and it is late before all is completed. Then, after the usual meal and admonishments, the people disperse.

Early the following morning the carpenters and those to whom work has been allotted gather early in X's house. A band, about two feet long, composed of alternate strands of dyed and undyed cedar-bark is prepared and placed on the

[a] Informants offered no explanation as to why this wholesale slaughter of dogs failed to arouse curiosity and suspicion in the uninitiated.

[bb] In fact, there was difference of opinion among Bella Coola informants on this point.

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[The Stomach-Cutting Dance]

The singers have also composed a song for each of the *dancers* and these too must be practised, while the men dance or remain still as they think fit. Since no uninitiated are present the affair is purely a rehearsal. The words of each of these songs is of the manner in which the person helped X to survive his ordeal. By this time it is late and the *kokseist* disperse after the usual meal and admonitions of the marshals.

The next day, *qaiim*, the carpenters assemble early in the morning to start work. Since X is entitled to portray any of the supernatural beings who are companions of his patron in the land above, it follows that there is wide variation in his choice of masks to be manufactured. The principal supernatural beings are always shown, and any animals, since all are supernatural, can likewise be displayed. As usual, a few *kokseist* are invited at midday to share the meal provided for the carpenters. The number of masks to be provided is often so great that two days or more are necessary for their completion, in which case no ceremony takes place on the night which would normally be *qaiim*; the *kokseist* merely gather and again practise their songs.

But the day after is *qaiim*. At dusk the *kokseist* are called in for a final rehearsal of the songs, and then a summons is sent to the uninitiated, who have been washing and beautifying themselves in eager anticipation. In Kimsquit it is customary to hang some of the masks on a sloping pole behind the fire and the sight of these unseats the non-members. First the singers beat out the song of one of the women mourners and the dancers in time to it, while the heralds near the door keep up a steady stream of remarks, encouraging the woman to perform yet more strenuously and to have no modesty about shaking her breasts. Then another of the women dancers, followed in succession by the third and fourth if that is the number who sang the mourning songs. Next the *dancer* performs, each in succession accompanying the song composed for him. Now comes the central feature of the evening, the performance of X himself. As the singers strike up the *shaman's* song which he is

2:M6:Hewitt E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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[The Mystery Dance]

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statements. Non-members recognize that Deer, Varied Thrush, and Wolf are really persons, but they have no idea who or what they are, while their whole training, combined with the atmosphere with which the whole ceremony is surrounded, makes it easy for them to believe that they are seeing supernaturally endowed animals. If an uninitiated person should voice his doubts, he would be reported at once to the marshals by a spy and forthwith made a *hoxhet*.

The next to come forth is a figure wearing a mask representing a man, and carrying a long stick to the end of which is tied a bundle of burning rags. The actor must be able to run swiftly, and, as he dashes at full speed around the fire, the strips of cloth are drawn out into a flaming stream behind him, producing a spectacular effect in the semi-gloom. *Awi'lēmlaxis* explains that this is Shooting Star, a supernatural being who behaves peculiarly and who has, therefore, passed rapidly and without the drawing invitation that accompanies the passage of the other visitors. When *Qwaxilas* gave this dance, the rags were dipped in coal-oil to make them burn brightly, and one informant thought that this particular supernatural one was, perhaps, not shown in the old days. It must be remembered that details of the ceremony are constantly changing according to the skill and inventive ability of the carpenters.

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To the accompaniment of O—— from the announcer and the drawing of the women, there next emerge four masked figures representing the four Carpenters. In whatever ceremonial they appear, their masks are the same because they, as master-artisans, are supposed to have fashioned them for themselves. They dance around the fire without singing and disappear behind the enclosure. *Awi'lēmlaxis* explains that these are *Mōxmoklēlaxa*, the Carpenters of *Nexpelemxtsa*.

Now *Qēqēlēx Alpaxsēm* comes forth. He is the herald of *Alpaxsēm* who summons the supernatural ones to *Nexpelemxtsa* for the winter ceremonial. He wears a man's mask, surmounted by a wooden bird which can be made to flap its wings by means of a hidden cord, and he carries a staff on up

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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[The Dance of Thunder]

with short, mincing steps. At intervals he pulls forth his stinger and rushes at one of the spectators, poking the weapon at him and humming fiercely. The writer took the part of a supernatural mosquito at one of the dances held in the winter of 1922-3 and remembers the expression of fear on the face of a younger member of the audience when about to be "stung." The victim was certainly afraid on that occasion, and if that feeling could survive the break-down of belief, it is not to be wondered at that fear was universal in the days when the *kukwisut* were thought to be possessors of supernatural powers. Another being who often appears at a dance of Thunder is Rainwater-Dripping-from-the-Roof. The masked figure walks slowly around the fire and *Ax'ilkwulaxic* explains that this is the water which drops from a hole in the planking. The Clowns are never omitted, and always cause amusement amid the gravity of the rite. One after another, the supernatural beings appear from the enclosure, circle the fire, and withdraw, accompanied by the sage remarks of *Ax'ilkwulaxic*. Finally there is a long pause, broken when a masked figure slowly toddles forth. It is Snail, who started at the same time as the other supernatural beings but arrived too late to be present at the dance of Thunder. Snail circles the fire and disappears. At this point the uninitiated are expelled and the rite concludes as usual.

Dancers whose patrons are Thunder, Earthquake, Sun, or Moon do not confine their dances to the ceremonial season, but perform whenever a manifestation of their patron occurs. If Thunder is heard, no matter what the time of day or season of year, X stands up and cries out:

"It [he does not refer to Thunder by name] is dancing too lustily up aloft. Kwa . . ."

The call of *kwa* . . . is thought to have a quieting effect on Thunder. Any *kukwisut* women present at once dress, then, accompanied by a number of his associates, X proceeds to the lowest house of the village where the same ritual is repeated. This is done in every dwelling, after which X returns home and

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cases though an infant in arms, though uninitiated, can be brought to dances by its mother; distinctions between rich and poor, slave and freeman, become of slight importance; all that really matters is whether a person is or is not a *kusiut*. Membership in the society seems to the uninitiated the most desirable thing in life, although their fears are always so strong that they never cease to dread actual admission. The feeling of class consciousness which exists in a somewhat mild form at other seasons of the year, gives place to a powerful sentiment of superiority on the part of members of the society over those who are not so fortunate. Even the respect normally shown to chiefs is submerged since they, too, are subject to the rule of the marshals.

Apart entirely from this attitude of superiority and inferiority, is the bond of fellowship engendered among members of the society by the rites. Whatever happens, the uninitiated must be deceived. Moreover, the psychological effect of gathering nightly in a body for a specific purpose is tremendous. Night after night they eat together; night after night they listen to the words of the marshals, who impress on them the need for co-operation and secrecy, who hold before them the good example set by their fellows who have carried out rites successfully, who emphasize the fact that they are doing as their fathers did. The ceremonial import is of greatest consequence at all these gatherings, but when the uninitiated have withdrawn the initiates relax somewhat and enjoy themselves. The food itself is always of the best and some of the usual restrictions are removed. It is, for example, the only time that women are allowed to eat the flesh of seals. If this delicacy is provided the marshals enjoy the tidbits, but after Cannibals, cowichan, and others have received preferential treatment, the remainder is distributed to all and sundry.

It has been stated by some writers, especially those unfamiliar with the significance of native ceremonial life, that the dances of the central tribes are orgies of immorality. This point was investigated with care and it may be stated posi-

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by a marshal with a billet of firewood; such a blow was never repeated and might or might not cause death. The woman with whom the member had misdemeaned himself was either initiated at once or killed if her relatives could not provide a name and prerogative.

Restrictions between members of the society were less severe. Particularly during the long nights of *lsxtämem* and *nusiutälsap*, when only *kukusiut* were present and when men and women, often scantily clad, were closely associated, there seems to have been a certain amount of immorality. It was by no means a time of licence, nor was laxity encouraged by the marshals; intercourse between members of the society did not conflict with *kusiut* regulations, and was accordingly a matter that concerned the individuals alone.

Relations between the actual dancers and members of the other sex were formerly governed by strict rules, rigidly enforced by the marshals. After the coming of a call, a man could hold intercourse with a *kusiut*, provided that he did so in his own home, but in no other. But after *nebusam*, when he left his house, continence was demanded until the end of the season and the burning of the enclosure-platform. The only exception to this rule was that if a second dancer received a call in the same house, the restrictions placed on the first were raised while the call was actually upon the second; that is, between *lsxtämem* and *nebusam*. After that both were subject to strict continence, unless a third call came to the same dwelling. The Bella Coola of today offer no explanation for this law, save that disregard of it was displeasing to the supernatural beings. An offender in this case was likewise punished by being struck once by a marshal.

The religious aspects of the dances, as exemplified by the attitude of the Bella Coola to the masked figures and other phenomena, was described in the early part of this chapter, but additional observations may now be made. The writer realises that the reader must find it difficult to understand how the uninitiated can be deluded into thinking that masked

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* 575 * 796 781 figures are really beings from another world. The explanation lies in the profound belief of all Bella Coola in the near presence of the supernatural; consequently, a supernatural explanation is the one normally given for all unusual incidents. The dances themselves are filled with strange manifestations, particularly the weird whistling concerning the origin of which the uninitiated have no idea. Once convinced by this means of the presence of unknown powers, it is easy for them to believe that the masked figures are visitors from the other world. Nor was their belief in former days shaken by certain representations which were palpably false, such as that of the sun. No one could believe that the disk which moved across the back of the house was the sun itself; but on the other hand it seemed marvellous to the uninitiated, ignorant of the means used to portray it. To the white man there seems a fundamental difference between a supernatural being and the representation of a strange object made to move by unseen means, but to the Bella Coola both belong to another realm, and are accordingly akin. Moreover, there were occasions when the uninitiated must have seen the shifting or actual falling of a mask, for example, during the fight with wasps. But here again the deep belief of the non-members came to the help of the *kukusiut*, who told their guests that this was caused by the coming of a call to the actor, and what might easily have become doubt and suspicion was thus changed to respect.

[178] [123] [114] The writer laboured under two tremendous difficulties in collecting information about *kusiut* matters; the present dances are mere shadows of what they formerly were, and there are no more uninitiated. His presence and quest for information served to stimulate interest and led to a partial revival of the old rites, but the bulk of his material was obtained from informants rather than from actual observation. It is a universal characteristic of mankind to idealize accounts of former practices, so it is not only possible, but probable, that the foregoing descriptions are more perfect than many of the rites to which

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they refer. Even when full allowance is made for this, the fact still remains that the *kukusiut* were able to carry out dances in which they deceived the uninitiated. Above all, it is clear that those who were not members of the society had the greatest respect for the powers of those who were, and although doubt may have existed concerning the identity of the supernatural visitors, there was not the slightest concerning the ability of the *kukusiut* to have, for example, their stomachs ripped open. The writer discussed this point with too many old men and women to have the slightest uncertainty on this point, and he feels confident that anyone who could have listened to the account of a reliable old man concerning his fears when he had "killed" a *kusiut* in this manner, would have shared his conviction.

It would be fascinating to discuss at some length the probable history of the *kusiut* society, but this would entail a comparison with the rites of other coastal tribes and belongs to the realm of comparative ethnology. This monograph deals only with Bella Coola practices as the writer saw them or heard them described, so that the history of the society can only be treated from this angle. It appears certain that the rites have increased in secrecy. One old marshal with whom the matter was discussed remembered having heard that long ago masks were constructed in the presence of the uninitiated. Considered as an isolated statement this would have little value, but in conjunction with information derived from Kimsquit it becomes of importance. It is true that in Kimsquit the masks are made in secret, but they are shown to the uninitiated as masks, and the writer was told of one instance in which *Tlequst*, during his round of the village, fell into the water and remained there all day, to the amusement of non-members who recognized that he was merely a disguised human being. It is even said that long ago the manufacture of masks was entrusted to influential uninitiated. It is clear that there has been a tremendous increase in secrecy even at Kimsquit, and a great deal more at Bella Coola. The writer believes that

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long ago the *kusiut* society was composed of individuals regarded as having supernatural endowments, and who perhaps believed this themselves. In course of time their influence increased to such an extent that they were able to convince non-members of the supernatural origin of objects used in their ceremonial.

Unfortunately, information from Kimsquit was obtained almost exclusively from one old man, who, though a marshal well informed in *kusiut* matters and in many ways an almost ideal informant, had long since realized that the dances could be nothing more than representations, and it is possible that his remarks were coloured by this knowledge. Though he tended to minimize the attitude of belief with which the uninitiated regarded masked figures, yet he fully agreed with every statement made by the Bella Coola themselves with regard to the firm belief of non-members concerning the supernatural powers of the dancers. He also confirmed statements respecting punishment if an error should occur, and mentioned the shooting of a Bella Bella dancer who had allowed his mask to fall during a *nusk* dance. As far as actual ritual is concerned, the differences in procedure between Bella Coola and Kimsquit are unimportant, and differences in belief are less than they appear at first sight. The Bella Coola *kuk̓usiut* seem to have perfected their organization and to have been able to impress the uninitiated to a greater extent than their Kimsquit fellows, but the fundamentals of the society are identical.

Traditions concerning the early history of the society are probably of little value historically, but they are important as indicating the mental attitude of the Bella Coola. Considering the importance of the society there are relatively few accounts of what took place long ago; the Bella Coola know that it exists, believe that the rites are identical with those carried out by their ancestors for generations, and theorize no further. It was only in the beginning of time that things were radically different; it is believed that then all the people were endowed